A SERMON

Preached before the

RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

Company

OF

MERCHANTS

Trading into the

LEVANT,

AT

S^t. *OLAVES HART-STREET*

LONDON,

Tuesday *JUNE*, 2. M.DC.LXVIII.

BY

THO. SMITH, M. A.

Fellow of MAGDALEN COLLEGE in OXFORD,
and Chaplain *to the* RIGHT HONOURABLE

S^r. *DANIEL HARVEY*,

His MAJESTIES *EMBASSADOUR to*
CONSTANTINOPLE.

LONDON,
Printed by *T. Roycroft*, for *S. Mearn*, Book-binder to the
KING'S most Excellent Majesty. 1668.

INSIGNISSIMO VIRO,

Domino ANDREÆ RICCARD *Equiti Aurato,*

Ampliſſimæ Societatis Mercatorum

Cum Imperatoris TURCARUM *ſubditis*

In Oriente Commercia exercentium

Præſidi longè digniſſimo,

Clariſſimo D. Vice-Præſidi,

D. ASSISTENTIBUS,

Reliquiſque ejuſdem Mercaturæ Sociis,

Viris Eximiis, Clariſſimis, & Humaniſſimis;

THO. SMITH

Hanc Concionem qualē qualem, brevi ac tumultuariò conceptam,

Et coram Iis nuper habitam,

In 1 D. Pet. III. *cap.* 19, 20. *v.*

(Quem difficilem locum pro pio erga Sacras literas amore

Diſcutiendum voluere)

Famque eorundem juſſu Publici Juris factam,

L. MQ. D. D. CQ.

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IMPRIMATUR.

Sam. Parker *RR^mo in Chriſto Patri ac Domino, D^no* Gilberto *Archi-Epiſcopo Cantuarienſi à Sacris Domeſticis.*

Ex Ædibus Lambeth.
Jun. 15. 1668.

A

SERMON

Preached before the

Levant-Company.

I. St. Peter, III. 19, 20.

By which alſo he went and Preached unto the Spirits in Priſon,
Which ſometime were diſobedient, when once the long-ſuffering of God waited in the daies of Noah, *while the Ark was a preparing: wherein few, that is, eight Souls were ſaved by Water.*

THE Firſt times of *Chriſtianity* were times of great tryal and danger, and the Goſpel, though it brought along with it the glad tydings of Salvation, and laid down rules of Life, beyond the ſtricteſt inſtitutions of *Philoſophy*, ſo conducive

ducive to the improvements of reaſon, which was Clouded and be-nighted with Error, and had loſt its command in the Soul, and was become ſubject to the Senſitive appetite, ſo directly tending to the advance of Humane nature, and the peace and quiet and benefit of the Univerſe, beyond the higheſt reaches and fetches of *State-Policy*; yet every where met with oppoſition from the Civil Powers; which might be enough to ſtagger and ſhake the weake faith of the newly-converted *Chriſtians*, and prove a dangerous temptation to make them Renounce that *Chriſtian* Profeſſion, they had ſo lately taken up, which they ſaw was purſued with Scorn, and Perſecution, and Death.

To Obviate and prevent which, is the deſign of S^t. *Peter* in this Epiſtle inſcribed to the believing *Jews*, and eſpecially thoſe of the *Aſian diſperſion*, his peculiar charge and care, as being the *Apoſtle* of the *Circumciſion*, and to encourage them to conſtancy and perſeverance, notwithſtanding their preſent ſufferings and hardſhips they were forced to indure and undergo: Which as he does throughout the whole,

Verſe. 1.

Gal. II. 7,8.

whole, ſo eſpecially he urges upon them in this *Chapter* from a double Conſideration:

The one, That to *Suffer for righteouſneſs ſake, and the Goſpel*, to endure Perſecutions and Croſſes upon the accompt of the true *Religion*, to bear witneſs to the Truth, though it coſt them their lives, was indeed a ſeeming miſery, but a real happineſs. *Verſe*, 14. *If ye ſuffer for Righteouſneſs ſake, happy are ye.* In the eye of the World their condition might ſeem dolorous and ſad, but to them it was to be eſteemed a matter of joy and triumph, that *They were accounted worthy to ſuffer for Chriſt.* A good Conſcience, and the honour of being a *Martyr*, and the hope of Glory, promiſed as a reward of their ſufferings and conſtancy, ſhould carry them through all difficulties; only they were to be very ſollicitous, that they ſuffered as *Chriſtians*, that no baſe or unlawfull Act brought them into thoſe ſad inſtances, that their Accuſers objected to them no other crime but their *Religion*, that they were not haled to the Barr, and arraigned *as Murderers, or as Thieves, or evil doers, or buſy-bodies in other mens matters*, not as Enemies to the *Government*,

under which they lived, not as *Seditious* nor *Pragmatical*, not as *Invaders* of other mens lives, or *Civil* Rights and Proprieties, nor as guilty of any of thoſe flagitious Crimes, that are juſtly puniſhable by *Humane Laws*.

The other, From the Example of our Bleſſed *Saviour* in the *verſe* before the *Text*, *For Chriſt alſo hath once ſuffered*—— *He* came down from his Glory, wherewith he was encircled, and aſſumed our Nature, and all its infirmities, and was content to be cloiſtered up Nine months in a *Virgins* Womb, and then came into the World a poor helpleſs Infant, expoſed to all the hardſhips and miſeries of life, to Hunger, and Thirſt, and Cold, and all the inconveniencies that attend Poverty; and at laſt, after he had ſpent very nigh Four and thirty years in ſadneſs and diſgrace, was condemned to the ignominy and torment of the *Croſs*. They could not faint, ſo long as they had his bleſſed *Example* in their eye; this muſt needs put life into them, and add ſtrength to their *Faith*, and conſtancy to their *Reſolutions*; and eſpecially if they would reflect, for whoſe ſake *Chriſt* underwent, with ſuch un-wearied

patience,

patience, all these sufferings; *Christ also hath once Suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the Flesh*; *Innocence* it self was arraigned, that the *Criminal* might be acquitted, and *Justice* condemned to dye, that We, that were the only Guilty, might survive. It was his *Love* to man, even when at enmity with *God*, that brought him down from Heaven, and fastened him to the Cross, and laid him in the Grave; and all this, that he might reconcile us to our Maker, whom we had offended, and *bring us to God:* and shall not we follow after the *Author and Finisher of our Faith*, this *Captain of our Salvation*, who was thus *consecrated by Suffering*, and endure a little for his sake, that Suffered so much for ours? Verse, 18.

The *Apostle* having pursued his Argument thus far from the Sufferings and Death of *Christ*, immediately subjoyns the *Article* of his *Resurrection*, *Being put to Death in the Flesh, but quickened by the Spirit*; * that is, though *Christ*, as man, died, and there was a real disunion of Soul and Body, yet he revived again by his

* *Oecumenius* in Loc. Ζωοποιηθεὶς τουτέστιν ἀναστὰς ἐκ νεκρῶν τῇ τῆς θεότητος δυνάμει.

Et paulò post, θανατωθεὶς μὲν τῇ φύσει τῆς σαρκὸς, τουτέστι τῇ Ανθρωπίνῃ, ἀναστὰς δὲ τῇ δυνάμει τῆς θεότητος.

Eternal

Eternal Power and *God-head*: for ſo much we muſt underſtand by thoſe words, *quickened by the Spirit*, which cannot be meant of the *Soul of Chriſt*, the other part of the *Humanity*, which, being immortal, can in no wiſe whatever be ſaid to be *made alive*, but are in a direct oppoſition to the former Clauſe, where *Fleſh* ſignifies *The whole Humane Nature*, as it doth in ſeveral places of Scripture, which refer particularly to our Saviour; 1 *Tim.* III. 16. *Without controverſy great is the Myſtery of Godlineſs, God manifeſted in Fleſh*, St. *John*, I. 14. *The Word was made Fleſh*; that is, the two Natures, *Divine and Humane*, were both united in the *Perſon of Chriſt*: *Rom.* IX. 5. *Of whom, as concerning the Fleſh, Chriſt came*: and *Rom.* I. 3. *Concerning his Son Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, who was made of the Seed of David according to the Fleſh*; that is, *Chriſt*, as man, the *Son of a Virgin-Mother*, derived his deſcent and Pedigree from the *Jewiſh Nation*, and particularly from the Royal Family, the houſe of *David*; and may be further explain'd by a Parallel place, 2 *Cor.* XIII. 4. *Though he was Crucified through weakneſs*; that is, by reaſon of the infirmity of the Humane

Nature

Nature, which is obnoxious to death, *yet he liveth by the Power of God*, where his *being Crucified through weakneſs* is the ſame with his being *put to death in the Fleſh*, and his *living by the Power of God* the ſame with his being *quickned by the Spirit.*

Hereupon the Apoſtle adds, by which *He*, that is, *Chriſt, went and Preached to the Spirits in Priſon*: ἐν ᾧ, *in* or *by which*, which, according to all *Grammatical Analogy*, does plainly and neceſſarily refer to the word immediately foregoing, πνεύματι *the Spirit*, and therefore I cannot but wonder at the * *Greek Scholiaſt*, who explains them by the *Illative* διὸ, which were to make the *Apoſtle* argue at a very looſe rate, and is altogether inconſequent and beſides his purpoſe, who in the continued order of his diſcourſe ſhews, how *Chriſt* may be ſaid to *Preach to the Spirits in Priſon.* Which reference being ſo plain and eaſy and natural, this Notion of *Spirit*, ſo agreeable to Scripture and the *Articles* of our *Faith*, will ſerve for a Key to open the difficulties of the Text. *By which alſo he went*

* Oecumen. Ἐν ᾧ τοῦτο ἀλλὶ οὐ διὰ τοῦτο κεῖται ἀλλιλογικῶς· ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ὅτι ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδίκων ἡμῶν ἀπέθανε, καὶ ἐκ τούτου δῆλος ἐμοὶ φαίνεται, ὅτι ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας ἀπάντων ἀνθρώπων ἦν θανατὸς ὑπέστη, λέγει ὅτι διὰ καὶ τοῖς ἐν τῷ Ἅδῃ κεκοιμημένοις ἐκήρυξεν.

went and Preached to the Spirits in Priſon: ——

This for the Connexion, which it was neceſſary for me to ſhew, in order to the full meaning and underſtanding of the words; which being difficult in themſelves, and made more ſo by the *fancies* and *deſcants* of *Interpreters*, it will take up ſome time to explain them, and ſettle and fix their true meaning, before I can raiſe any *doctrinal Propoſitions* to *build us up in our moſt holy Faith*; as in our ordinary building, the Foundation muſt firſt be cleared, before we can raiſe any ſtrong or laſting Superſtructure.

1. Some there are, and thoſe great Names, juſtly reverenced for their Learning and their Antiquity, men that by their Writings and by their Sufferings have deſerved well of the *Church of God*, who, relying too much on the *Literal* ſence of the Words, which they took in groſſe, and confounded without any diſtinction, pleaſed themſelves with this Interpretation, That *Chriſt* in his Soul, then really ſeparate from his Body, during the intervening ſpace between his Death and his Reſurrection, Preached to the Souls of men below

below in Priſon, which they explain by Hell, or Ἅδης, ſome place ſeparate and diſtinct from Heaven: and accordingly that the *Patriarchs* and their *Poſterity*, together with *Plato* and other good-natured and enlightned *Heathen*, upon their owning of *Him*, were freed and delivered from that *Priſon* where they had been ſo long detained, and redeemed from that ſtate of Thraldom; thoſe only, that rejected him, continuing there upon the accompt of their Infidelity.

An Expoſition received by ſeveral of the Ancients, and ſo diſperſed in their Writings, that I ſhall not heap up Citations in the Proof of a Thing that is granted on all hands: I ſhall therefore content my ſelf with that ſingle one of * St. *Clement* of *Alexandria*, Τί δ' οὐχὶ δηλοῦσιν εὐηγγελίσθαι τὸν Κύριον τοῖς τε ἀπολωλόσιν ἐν τῷ κατακλυσμῷ, μᾶλλον δὲ πεπεδημένοις καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ τε καὶ φρουρᾷ συνεχομένοις; *That the Scriptures manifeſtly*

* *Stromatum* lib. 6. p. 270. ex Editione Fr. *Sylburgii Græc.* A. C. 1592. Who taking this for granted, preſently after argues thus, p. 271. Εἰγὰ οὖν ὁ Κύριος δι' οὐδὲν ἑτερὸν εἰς ᾅδου κατῆλθεν, ἢ διὰ τὸ εὐαγγελίσασθαι, ὅσπερ κατῆλθεν, ἤτοι πάντας εὐαγγελίσασθαι ἢ μόνους Ἑβραίους. Εἰ μὲν οὖν πάντας, σωθήσονται πάντες οἱ πιστεύσαντες, κἂν ἐξ ἐθνῶν ὄντες τύχωσιν, ἐξομολογησάμενοι ἤδη ἐκεῖ.———

Εἰ δὲ Ἰδαίους μόνον εὐηγγελίσατο, οἷς ἔλειπεν ἡ διὰ τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἐπίγνωσίς τε καὶ πίστις, δῆλόν που, ὡς ἄρα ἀπροσωπολήπτου ὄντος τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ οἱ Ἀπόστολοι, καθάπερ ἐνταῦθα, οὕτως κἀκεῖ τοὺς ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἐπιτηδείους εἰς ἐπιστροφὴν εὐηγγελίσαντο. For other Teſtimonies I refer the Learned Reader to *Arch-Biſhop Uſher*'s anſwer to the Jeſuites challenge, Chap. of *Limbus Patrum*: and to the Learned Dr. *Pearſons* Expoſition of the *Apoſtles Creed* on the Article of *Chriſts deſcent into Hell.*

went and Preached to the Spirits in Priſon: ——

This for the Connexion, which it was neceſſary for me to ſhew, in order to the full meaning and underſtanding of the words; which being difficult in themſelves, and made more ſo by the *fancies* and *deſcants* of *Interpreters*, it will take up ſome time to explain them, and ſettle and fix their true meaning, before I can raiſe any *doctrinal Propoſitions* to *build us up in our moſt holy Faith*; as in our ordinary building, the Foundation muſt firſt be cleared, before we can raiſe any ſtrong or laſting Superſtructure.

1. Some there are, and thoſe great Names, juſtly reverenced for their Learning and their Antiquity, men that by their Writings and by their Sufferings have deſerved well of the *Church of God*, who, relying too much on the *Literal* ſence of the Words, which they took in groſſe, and confounded without any diſtinction, pleaſed themſelves with this Interpretation, That *Chriſt* in his Soul, then really ſeparate from his Body, during the intervening ſpace between his Death and his Reſurrection, Preached to the Souls of men below

below in Prison, which they explain by Hell, or Ἅδης, some place separate and distinct from Heaven: and accordingly that the *Patriarchs* and their *Posterity*, together with *Plato* and other good-natured and enlightned *Heathen*, upon their owning of *Him*, were freed and delivered from that *Prison* where they had been so long detained, and redeemed from that state of Thraldom; those only, that rejected him, continuing there upon the accompt of their Infidelity.

An Exposition received by several of the Ancients, and so dispersed in their Writings, that I shall not heap up Citations in the Proof of a Thing that is granted on all hands: I shall therefore content my self with that single one of * St. *Clement* of *Alexandria*, Τί δ' οὐχὶ δηλοῦσιν εὐηγγελίσθαι τὸν Κύριον τοῖς τε ἀπολωλόσιν ἐν τῷ κατα-κλυσμῷ, μᾶλλον δὲ πεπεδημένοις καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ τε καὶ φρουρᾷ συνεχομένοις; *That the Scriptures mani-*

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Εἰ δὲ Ἰουδαίους μόνον εὐηγγελίσατο, οὓς ἔλεπεν ἡ διὰ τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἐπίγνωσις τε καὶ πίστις, δῆλόν που, ὡς ἄρα ἀπρεσωπολήπτως ὁ Θεὸς καὶ ὁ Κύριος, καθάπερ ἐνταῦθα, ὅτας κἀκεῖ τοὺς ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἐπιδεδειγμένους εἰς ἐπιστροφὴν εὐηγγελίσατο. For other Testimonies I refer the Learned Reader to *Arch-Bishop Usher*'s answer to the Jesuites challenge, Chap. of *Limbus Patrum*: and to the Learned Dr. *Pearsons* Exposition of the *Apostles Creed* on the Article of *Christs descent into Hell.*

festly

feſtly declare, that our Lord preached the Goſpel to thoſe that periſhed in the Floud, yea rather to all them that were enthralled, and detained in Priſon, and held in Ward. So that the *Text* is alleged as the end and deſign of *Chriſts deſcent* into Hell, which They underſtood Locally, and by *which* They explain *it*. But whatever be the meaning of that *Article*, which I am not in the leaſt obliged to explain, (which *Ruffinus* tells us was left out of the Old *Creed* of the *Roman Church*, and is not extant in the *Nicene*, and was firſt found in that of *Aquileia*, where He was a *Presbyter*) their Interpretation of theſe words can no way ſtand. For

1. It ſuppoſes ἐν ᾧ, *by which*, to refer to the *Soul of Chriſt*, which before has been ſufficiently diſproved, (and the Tranſlating the words by *vivens ſpiritu*, which perhaps might contribute to the miſtake among the *Latins*, is very untrue, all the *Greek Copyes* having not ζῶν, but ζωοποιηθεὶς, not *living*, but *made alive*) and by and by ſhall be more fully evidenced.

2. Suppoſing the meaning of the *Article* in their ſenſe, there may be other ends of the *deſcent* aſſigned, this of theirs to free the *Patriarchs*,

triarchs, and to *preach* to those that were dead long before, being impossible to be true: As being

1. Repugnant to the plain words of the *Text*, which says expressly, that *the Souls preached to were disobedient in the days of* Noah; marking out that Generation of men that was contemporary with *Noah*, and the particular time of their being disobedient, the time before the *Floud, while the Ark was a preparing*. But this cannot belong to the *Fathers*, who lived in the Ages before *Noah*; and yet they reckon * *Adam* among those that ascended with *Christ*, (which they grounded on the XXVII. St. *Matthew* 52. *and the Graves were opened, and many bodies of Saints, which slept, arose*) and consequently that He enjoyed the benefit of this *descent*; nor can They be said to be disobedient or refractory. *Abel*, and *Seth*, and *Enoch* served *God* in their Generations, and had *this testimony* that *They were righteous*. Heb. XI. 13. *These dyed in Faith*.

* Inconveniens erat, ut cum multi ex eo nati remissionem acciperent peccatorum, & beneficium resurrectionis consequerentur, non magis ipse Pater omnium hominum hujusmodi gratiam consequeretur. *Origen.* Tract. XXXV. in D. *Matth.* cap. 27.

2. It is Repugnant to the condition of departed Souls, whether those of the righteous, or those of the disobedient.

1. The Souls of the righteous were in a bliſsfull and happy condition, and needed not that *Chriſt* ſhould be preached to them. They had, when they were upon Earth, a prænotion and belief of *Meſſias* that was to be born *in the fullneſs of Time*, and by his Merits they were
Revel. XIII.8. ſaved, who was *The Lamb ſlain from the Foundation of the World*, that is, in the Divine decree and appointment; and to all intents and purpoſes the merits of his death were applicable to thoſe that lived before his coming in the Fleſh, as to thoſe that live after. It was by virtue of his pretious *bloud*, that was ſhed upon the *Croſs*, they were accepted that were accepted. I know it was maintained of *Old*, that, notwithſtanding this ſuppoſed deſcent and deliverance, the Souls of departed Saints are ſtill *in abditis receptaculis & exterioribus atriis*, in ſome ſecret receſſes, where they expect the *Reſurrection* of the *Body*. But the *holy Scriptures* make no mention of a *Third eſtate*; no *Limbus Patrum* or *Purgatory* to be met with there. 'Tis true, They are not in that perfection and glory in Heaven, to which They ſhall be advanced after the Reſurrection, when their ſouls and bodies

bodyes ſhall be re-united; yet however They are in a ſtate of Bliſs and Happineſs: *The Souls of the Juſt are in the hands of the Lord*, and therefore there was no need they ſhould long and wiſh for *Chriſts deſcent into the lower Parts*, who before had been made Partakers of the benefits of his *death* and *paſſion*, as ſome ſtrangely gloſs from * *Zach.* IX. 11, 12. *As for thee alſo, by the bloud of thy Covenant I have ſent for thy Priſoners out of the Pit, wherein is no Water; Turn ye to the ſtrong hold, ye Priſoners of Hope.* Which words in their *Literal* ſenſe import only thus much; That God either had or would for his Covenants ſake free the *Jews*, (the People of *the daughter of Sion*, v. 9.) out of their *Babylonian* ſlavery, (bring them from the dry, and parched, and ſandy places of *Chaldæa*, where they were carried Captive) according to their hopes and expectations. And,

2. For the Souls of the *unfaithful* and *diſobedient*, who dyed in their ſins, and at defiance with God, They were ſhut up in Priſon, never to be releaſed: The Sentence was paſt upon Them, and there is no hope or poſſibility of ever

* Which *Vatablus* renders in the *Future*, and thus interprets; *Liberaturus ſum Te: Intelligit Patres, qui deceſſerunt ante adventum Chriſti, & in fide ipſius Chriſti venturi mortui ſunt*: Herein followed by ſeveral *Pontifician* Writers, who cite this Text to prove a *Limbus Patrum*.

ever getting it reverſed; nor were *they* in a capacity of receiving benefit by the Preaching of *Chriſt*. There is no ſaving faith, no effectual repentance in thoſe *infernal Regions*: Rivers of tears there poured out cannot waſh off the ſtain and guilt of Sin. After *death* immediately follows *the Judgment*, and the Soul at its departure knows its Doom, and what it muſt truſt to for ever.

Heb. XI. 27.

3. It is contrary to the end and deſign of the Goſpel, which only reſpects the living in its Publication; *Go ye, and teach all Nations.* St. *Mat.* XXVIII. 19. and more fully, St. *Marke*, XVI. 15. *Go ye into all the World, and preach the Goſpel to every Creature*, was the Commiſſion *Chriſt* gave the *Apoſtles* after his Reſurrection; that is, Publiſh the Goſpel through all the Parts of the known and Habitable World, make known the Doctrine of the *Croſs* to all the Nations of the Earth, and make *Proſelytes* and Diſciples by *Baptiſm*, and inſtruct them in the true Faith: it is not, Deſcend into the Regions below, and there Preach me, as * ſome have fancyed the *Apoſtles* to have done after their death, that they

* *Clem. Alex. Strom. lib.* VI. Δέδεικται κἂν τῷ δευτέρῳ στρωματεῖ τοὺς ἀποστόλους ἀκολούθως τῷ Κυρίῳ καὶ τοὺς εἰς Ἅδου εὐηγγελισμένους· ἐχρῆν γὰρ οἶμαι ὥσπερ κἀνταῦθα, οὕτως δὲ κἀκεῖσε τοὺς ἀρίστους τῶν μαθητῶν μιμητὰς γενέσθαι τοῦ διδασκάλου· ἵν' ὁ μὲν τοὺς ἐξ Ἑβραίων, οἱ δὲ τὰ ἔθνη εἰς ἐπιστροφὴν ἀγάγωσι. p. 271.

they might ſpeak congruouſly to their *Hypotheſis*. But we know, and are aſſured from *Scripture*, that He that now refuſes and ſlights the overtures of Life and Salvation, that rejects the offers of a Saviour, and prefers a few bruti∫h Pleaſures, which periſh in the enjoyment, and yet leave a deadly ſting behind them, before the Promiſes of unmixt Joy and Glory, muſt never expect the benefit of an after-Faith or Repentance in another World. If we would be happy hereafter, it muſt be procured in the time of life; *Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of Salvation*, even while we live; and *the night cometh*, that I may apply that of our bleſſed *Saviour*, S^t. *John*. IX. 4. the night of death, *wherein no man can work*. 2 *Cor*. VI. 2.

Thus you ſee this Firſt Expoſition, however it was ſo greedily ſwallowed down by ſome of the Antients, and gained credit from their Authority, is very weak, and bottoms upon a Sandy Foundation, and ſignifies juſt nothing, as to the true ſenſe and meaning of the Words.

2. Others there are, who, rejecting the *Literal* ſenſe, fly to a *Myſtical* one, underſtanding by the *Spirits in Priſon* ſinners in general,

* who

* who are impriſoned and ſhut up in darkneſs and infidelity, while they live and are in the Fleſh, and are ſlaves to their carnal deſires; * who were diſobedient after the manner and likeneſs of thoſe, that lived in the times of *Noah*. But againſt this Expoſition I have theſe Two things to allege,

* *Gloſſa Interlinearis, iis qui erant in carcere tenebrarum vel infidelitatis, vel in carcere, i.e. in carnalibus deſideriis vivebant.*

* *Grot. in loc. Loquitur, quaſi iidem fuiſſent, & fuerant iidem Spiritus ſive animi non ἀσωμάτῳ, ut Ariſtoteles loquitur, ſed genere: i.e. animi pariter Deo inutiles, illi ſci. qui Noæ prædicationi non crediderunt.*

1. In General, That it is a ſure Rule of the *Schools*, and ought to be followed in the explaining of *Scripture*, *Scripturæ verba proprie accipienda ſunt, quando nihil inde abſurdi ſequitur*; that the words of *Scripture* are to be taken properly, and according to their Literal meaning, and as they are vulgarly underſtood, when nothing of abſurdity, nothing that is diſagreeable to *Faith*, or the *common notices of Mankind*, can follow from ſuch a literal acception. And therefore to ſeek for *Allegoryes* in plain ſenſe, and find out Myſteries, where none were intended, is neither ſafe, nor proper; for if a liberty be once indulged herein, what bounds can be ſet to a roving fancy, which loves to ſport it ſelf with pleaſing *Ideas* and *Phantaſms* it ſelf has raiſed? and men too are very favourable to the iſſue of their brain, thoſe fine and nice

conjectures

conjectures and interpretations, that owe their conception and being to a ſtrong and ungoverned *imagination*. And how much *Religion* has been prejudiced, and the truth of *Scripture-ſtory* brought into queſtion by this ἀλληγορομανία, this vein and humour of *Allegorizing*, which *Origen* by his great Name and Learning brought into the Church, having borrowed it from *Philo* the *Jew*, I wiſh there was no cauſe to complain, eſpecially in this *Age* of ours, wherein every *Pretender*, out of an itch of vain-glory to ſeem wiſer then others, preſently ſets up for an *Origenian*, and vents his ill-grounded conjectures for proofs and demonſtrations, and revives Old opinions, very *uncertain*, and *vain*, and *heretical*, and juſtly condemned as ſuch by the Zeal and Learning of former Ages, as the great *Truths* of *God*, as if Providence could not be juſtified without their admittance, nor the Articles of Faith and the Attributes of God Salved, unleſs we believe a *Præexiſtence* of *Souls*, *Genii* living in the Air, and *vehicles* formed out of *Æther* by the *Plaſtick* life and virtue of the Soul after its departure out of the Body. But it is to be feared, that, while

they follow *Origen* too close, even in his errors, and take up his way of interpreting some parts of *Scripture*, according to a pretended *Cabbala* and a *mystick Theology* fetched from *Plato* and *Proclus*, they have given occasion to *Atheists* and *profane Persons* to deny the Truth of all.

2. In special, That the *Text* does expressly refer, as was said before, to the times of *Noah*, and to those that lived in them; and therefore cannot be meant, as the learned † *Grotius* would have it, of *Christs preaching by the Apostles to the Gentiles after his Ascension*: For this would be to confound two distant Ages of the World together, and to make St. *Peter* speak unintelligibly, and contrary to all usage and custom: for who can rationally imagine that St. *Peter*, when he saith, *Christ preached to the Spirits in prison, which were sometimes disobedient*, should mean this preaching of his own and after Ages, who is so careful first to tell us of what persons he meant it of, and then is so express and punctual about the right timing of it? for the *Spirits* that were preached to, were disobedient: but when? why, πολὲ *of Old*, which being a general reference of time, and so might comprehend

† *Per quem Dei spiritum missum in Apostolos,* πολὲ *postquam in cœlum ascendit, Christus dicitur prædicasse Gentibus, quia Apostoli id ejus nomine ac virtute fecerunt.* in loc.

comprehend all from the *Creation*, *He* limits and reſtrains to the *Age* juſt before the Floud.

Beſides this, there is another *Figurative notion* of the word φυλακὴ, brought in firſt by St. *Hierome*, and taken up by the ſame *Grotius* and others, which I ſhall briefly examine.

They taking the *Greek* word, which we juſtly render *Priſon*, in a large and unconfined ſenſe for any kind of *cloſe receptacle*, thereby underſtand the Body, in which the Soul is detained and ſhut up, as a *Sword* in a *Sheath*. Thus † *Grotius*, *Hinc interpretari liceat illud*, 1 *Pet.* III. 19. Τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασι, *illis Spiritibus humanis, quos velut in vagina detineri inutiles Deus querebatur*; who is herein followed by a late moſt *Excellent*, *and Learned Perſon* of our own *Nation*, who takes alſo *theſe Spirits in Priſon to be the Souls of men, that lay ſo ſheathed, Senſleſs and unprofitable in their Bodies, immerſed ſo deep in carnality, as not to perform any Service to God, who inſpired and placed them there.*

† *Annot.* in *Gen.* VI. 3.

But to this I Anſwer, That the ground of this Conjecture is very uncertain, as being built upon an interpretation of another place of Scripture, whereto they ſuppoſe this to refer,

which yet may be otherwise accompted for: it is * *Gen.* VI. 3. which our *Translators* have thought fit to render thus; *And the Lord said, my Spirit shall not alwaies strive with man*; but They by reason of some affinity in sound the Verb דון hath with נדן (whence they will have it derived, though contrary to all *Analogy and form*) which signifies a *Sheath* or *Scabbard*, and *metaphorically*, a Body, thus; *And the Lord said, my Spirit shall not alwaies be sheathed in man*, which * They are pleased to Paraphrase, *And God said, the Souls which I have breathed and given to men, the Sons of* Adam, *and which are sheathed in them, imprisoned, detained unprofitably, shall no longer continue and abide in them.* But to this I have several things to say; As that

1. There is no need, in favour of this Interpretation, to fancy with † *Cappellus* in his *Critica Sacra*, and others, that the *Greeke Interpreters* read otherwise in their *Copies*, either לא ירום as He, or לא ילין, who thus render

* In the *Hebrew* the Words are, לא ידון רוחי באדם לעולם

* Annot. p. 800. *Grotius* in loc. *Non permanebit*, i. e. *nolo diu permaneat. Spiritus à me datus homini non manebit in homine diu inclusus, velut in vaginâ, quippe nulli bono usui, non magis quam ensis tectus. Nam* נדן *est vagina*, 1 *Paral.* XXI. 27. *Et Corpus Chaldaicè sic dicitur, Dan.* VII. 15. *nempè quòd Spiritum intrà se contineat. Hinc interpretari liceat illud*, 1 *Pet.* III. 19. *ut supra.* And to the same purpose in his *Commentary* upon the *Text*; *Si proprietatem vocum sequimur, id dicit, non erit ut in vaginâ detentus sic spiritus meus in homine*, i. e. *non erit inutilis animus, quem ei dedi, sicut ensis in vaginâ, qui nihil efficit ejus, ad quod factus est* —— *Est autem vagina carcer gladio. Chaldæis* נרנה *vagina. Eodem modò corpus Hominis Chaldæi vocant, ut Dan.* VII. 15. *Et in Talmudicis sæpè. Sic & Tertullianus, Caro vagina afflatûs Dei. lib. de Resurrect. carnis. Hæc interpretatio non nova est, sed Hieronymi ad Esaiam.*

† Lib. IV. c. 4. p. 248.

render the Words, ὁ μὴ καταμείνῃ τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τούτοις εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, *My Spirit ſhall not abide or continue in theſe men for ever*; who are herein followed by the *Syriack* and *Arabick* Tranſlators, and with them *Onkelos* in his *Chaldee Paraphraſe* (which indeed in the general is nothing but a ſtrict and rigid verſion, a few words ſome time being added over and above only for explication) does well enough agree; * *This wicked Generation ſhall not be eſtabliſhed before me for ever.* But this without any reference to נדן or the *abiding and continuing of a Sword in a ſheath*, and they may in their *Tranſlation* * be very probably ſuppoſed to allude to, and have in their mind the *Syriack* Word ܢܕܢ, which in the *New Teſtament* is ſet down to expreſs the *Greek* καταπαῦειν and ἀποκαθίεσθαι, it being uſual for *defective Verbs* of theſe kinds mutually to exchange their ſignifications. The *Hebrew* and the *Greek* being thus reconciled, I ſay

* לא יתקיים דרא בישא הדין קדמי לעלם.

* So Mr. *Fuller* in his Learned *Miſcellanies.* Lib. V. cap. 5.

2. That the Notion of the Word, as it ידון refers to ſheathing, is very forced and ſtrained, and not to be parallell'd in *Scripture*, nor in any of the *Languages*, that derive from the *Hebrew*,

brew, as neither can the Notion of *my Spirit* for the *Spirit*, *that I have breathed in them.*

3. That the ordinary and common acception of the *word* for *ſtriving* or *contending* is very applicable to the ſcope and deſign of the *Text*, *And the Lord ſaid, my Spirit ſhall not alwaies ſtrive with man*, I will no longer endure the perverſneſs and obſtinacy of this evill and ſinfull Generation, I will no longer bear with their Provocations, (and ſure as long as God forbears, He may well be ſaid to ſtrive with man) but now am reſolved to puniſh; for *that he alſo is Fleſh*; that is, *hath corrupted his waies*, and has polluted himſelf by abominable acts of uncleaneſs, *yet his days ſhall be an hundred and twenty years*, ſo long time I will forbear, *ſaith God*, and no longer. So that Three things are here plainly obſervable,

I. A judgment denounced in the Threat, that *his Spirit ſhould not alwayes ſtrive with man*; Gods patience was provoked, and he expreſſes his reſentments, and threatens Revenge.

II. The equity of the judgment in the reaſon of the Denuntiation, *For that he alſo is Fleſh*, becauſe of their fleſhly luſts and abominations.

III. A

III. A mercifull forbearance of the judgment threatned in the time allotted for their repentance, *Yet his days ſhall be one hundred and twenty years*; not as if the life of man was to be ſhortned, and brought within the compaſs of this term of years; but that beyond this time God would not defer his vengeance, as it is excellently *Paraphraſed* by the forementioned *Onkelos*, * *The ſpace of one hundred and twenty years ſhall be given to them*, to this end, *that they may return and repent.* God would not cut them off in their ſins, but gave them ſpace and time to repent, if they would make a right uſe of it.

* ארכא יהיב להון מאה ועשרין שנין אם יתובון׃

All which being ſo agreeable in themſelves, and following ſo naturally one from the other, and ſuitable to the ſcope and deſign of the *Text*, and to the common and ordinary ſignification of the words, do ſufficiently confirm and juſtifie this interpretation.

3. I come now in the Third place to fix upon the right meaning of the words, which you may take in this ſhort and plain *Paraphraſe*; that *Chriſt* by his eternal Power and *Godhead* preached to the Generation of men immedi-

immediately before the *Floud*, whoſe Souls are now ſhut up in *Hell*, upon the accompt of their diſobedience and infidelity.

All which may be clearly and demonſtratively made out from the *Text*.

1. That *Chriſt* is here meant, is evident beyond all poſſibility of contradiction, for about Him the diſcourſe proceeds: He that once ſuffered for ſins, the juſt one, that He might bring us to God., He that was put to death in the Fleſh, but quickened by the Spirit, the ſame *preached to the Spirits in Priſon*. Which plainly ſuppoſes, and proves too, his *Godhead*, in that He præexiſted long before his Incarnation. For *operari ſequitur eſſe*, How could *He* be ſaid to *Preach*, unleſs *He were? Before* Abraham *was, I am*, ſaid *Chriſt* to the *Jews*. S^t. *John*, VIII. 58. Here in the *Text*, before *Noah* was, He is; yea, before the Foundations of the World were laid. S^t. *John*, I. 1. *In the beginning was the Word*, —— in the beginning of the *Creation*, (for it is a plain alluſion to *Gen.* I. 1. *In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth*) when as yet there was nothing made; (for *v.* 3. *All things were made by him*, and ſo *Hebr.* I. 2. *By whom*

whom alſo he made the Worlds) the *Word*, the Son of *God*, the Second *Perſon* in the Sacred *Trinity* had his being and exiſtence, and conſequently is *God Eternal*. *Rom.* IX. 5. (ſpeaking of the *Jews* and their *Privileges*, by reaſon of the Covenant God made with the *Patriarchs*) *Whoſe are the Fathers, and of whom, as concerning the Fleſh, Chriſt came, who is over all, God bleſſed for ever.* A Text able to confound all the *Sophiſtry* and *blaſphemyes* of *Socinus* and his *Party*, who deny the *Divinity* of our Bleſſed *Saviour*, and put them to an eternal ſilence, who very preſumptuouſly reject the *Myſteries* of *Faith*, becauſe they cannot fully comprehend them, as if the ſhallow capacity of a man were to be the meaſure and ſtandard of *divine Truth:* when they can give no ſatisfactory *Accompts* of the ordinary *Phænomena* of Nature, much leſs of its ſecret operations, and leaſt of all, of the Myſteries of *Providence*. And if this were a ſufficient reaſon to deny the *Articles* of Faith, becauſe They are above our capacity, They may as well deny the being of a God, becauſe they cannot have *full* and *comprehenſive* Notions of *Infinity*, *Eternity*, *Omnipreſence*, and the like. But certainly we have the high-

eſt reaſon in the World to believe the Articles of the *Chriſtian Faith*, which are ſo plainly revealed in the Holy *Scriptures*; becauſe whatſoever God has been pleaſed to reveal is infallibly certain, and therefore, when propoſed to me, I am bound to believe it, though I cannot comprehend the *modus*, how it is ſo. This for the *Perſon*, *He went and preached.*

2. The *manner* or *means*, by which *Chriſt* is ſaid to Preach, by *which Spirit*, that is, by His *eternal Power and Godhead*, as was ſhewn in the beginning, and now ſhall be further proved. For by the ſame Spirit, by which *Chriſt* roſe from the Dead, *He preached to the Spirits in Priſon:* But *Chriſt* roſe from the dead by virtue of his *Godhead* and *divine Power*. *Rom.* I. 4. *Declared to be the Son of God with Power, according to the Spirit of Holineſs by the Reſurrection from the dead.* Heb. IX. 14. *How much more ſhall the bloud of Chriſt, who through the eternal Spirit offered himſelf without ſpot to God, purge your Conſcience from dead works to ſerve the living God?* that is, How much more available, then the bloud of Bulls, and Goats, and Calves, and all the Sacrifices offered up under the *Moſaical* œconomy, for the

the cleanſing from ſin, and delivering from its Guilt and condemning Power, and in order to the ſerving of God acceptably, is the Bloud of *Chriſt*, ſhed upon the *Croſs*, who, after he had raiſed his Body out of the Grave by his *divine Power*, preſented himſelf a *perfect Mediator* to God in our behalf?

3. That *Hell* is meant by this *Priſon* is very eaſy to conceive, having before proved it could not be meant of the *Body*, much leſs can it of the *Grave*, for the Soul at its departure takes a flight beyond the Grave and Regions of Death, and cannot be pent up in thoſe Charnel houſes under ground; nor does it *ſleep*, as ſome have fondly dreamed, that is, remain in a ſtate of dulneſs and inactivity, without any apprehenſion or knowledge till the Reſurrection, as we ſhall ſee anon, but goes to the place and ſtate allotted for it according to its deſerving. And the reſemblance and compariſon between *Hell* and a *Priſon* is very fit and proper: When men are legally *Impriſoned*, it is either for their *Crimes* or for their *Debts*; Now every un-repenting Sinner, that dyes in his Sins, hath broken the *Law* of *God*, hath made aſſaults upon his *Attri-*

butes, and rebelled against Heaven, and by this means has contracted a guilt upon his Soul, which binds over to punishment, is a debtor to *God*, and has forfeited his Soul to *Justice*, and because He took no care to *agree* with God, who was become his *Adversary*, and impleaded him, *While He was in the Way with him*, did not in his *life time* compound for the Debt, and get the Bond Cancell'd, is justly cast into *Hell*: A Prison because

1. Without *Light*, which must needs add to the horrour of it. There is *utter darkness*, and *the blackness of darkness for ever*.

2. Without *Liberty*. Here *Malefactors* are secured and kept safe till their tryal. * *Thus* hath God *reserved* the *Apostate Angels*, † and the Souls of wicked men, *in everlasting Chains under darkness, unto the Judgment of the great day*. But with this vast and great difference, that They shall be remanded and sent back to this *Prison*, where there will be no possibility of escape or ransom, where they must undergo an eternal Imprisonment.

* *Jud.* vers. 6. 2 St. *Pet.* II. 4.
† vers. 9.

3. Without *Comfort*. *Prisons* usually are dismal and loathsom Places. To be immured

and

and ſhut up from company, to be deprived of the benefits of converſe, and of the ſweets and pleaſures of liberty, to ſpend ones days in ſadneſs and melancholy, and to meaſure out the ſlow minutes of ones weariſome life with ſighs and Groans; This is That, that troubles *nature*, and puts her into a fright to think of: How diſmal then! How inſupportable muſt it be to lye under the wrath of God, under the quick apprehenſion of a guilty mind, under the ſting of Conſcience, to be gnawed upon by that worm, that never dyes, to have no other company but Fiends and damned Spirits equally miſerable with themſelves, and to be in a continual expectation of the great Day of *Accompt*, when the *Body* ſhall be raiſed to be partaker of the Puniſhment, as it was of the Sin!

4. *Chriſt preached to the Spirits in Priſon*; that is, τοῖς ἔσι ἡ νῦν ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασι, to thoſe men, whoſe Souls are now in *Priſon*, caſt into *Hell*, but then were alive in their *Bodyes*; thoſe being long ſince diſſolved and conſumed in the Waters, that overwhelmed them, while their Souls ſurvive, as being immortal, and are reſerved in *Hell* for Judgement.

* So that the *Priſon* plainly refers to the place and condition, in which their Souls are, as a juſt *puniſhment* of their diſobedience, and not at all to the *Preaching:* which will yet further appear from the IV. *Chap.* of this *Epiſtle*, Verſ. 6. εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ νεκροῖς εὐηγγελίσθη, *For this cauſe alſo was the Goſpel Preached to the dead*; that is, to thoſe, who are now dead, but then were alive, when the *Goſpel* was preached to them. Where (that I may note this by the way) the *Apoſtle* ſpeaks not in general of *Gods* making known his will to the Ages before *Chriſt*, but particularly mentions the Preaching of the *Goſpel*, which muſt be limited to the times of *Meſſias*, and therefore thoſe in that *verſe*, that are dead, to whom the *Goſpel* was Preached, muſt be ſuppoſed to have lived ſince the coming of *Chriſt* in the *Fleſh*, and conſequently this place is not parallel,

* Hereto perchance may be referred that difficult place in *Job*, Ch. XXVI. v. 5. which the *Vulgar Latin* hath thus, *Gigantes gemunt ſub aquis*; the LXX. render, μὴ γίγαντες μαιωθήσονται ὑποκάτωθεν ὕδατος, καὶ τῶν γειτόνων αὐτῶν; from another ſignification of the *Verb*: *Symmachus*, στρατιῶται καὶ οἱ γείτονες ἐμοῖς, and ſo may denote the *Gyants* נפילים (thoſe mighty Apoſtates, that fell from the belief and Service of God, into Atheiſm and (στρατιᾶται) open rebellion againſt Heaven) who were upon the Earth in thoſe dayes, *Gen.* VI. 4. that is, *in the dayes of Noah*; and the manner of their puniſhment by being overwhelmed by Water, and that They and their Accomplices are now troubled, and forced, by reaſon of the horrour and ſadneſs of their condition, to ſigh and lament: and *Rephaim* (רפאים) is ſo rendered by the LXX in other places, and particularly, *Prov.* IX. 18. γηγενεῖς, *Symmachus* again, στρατιῶται (which name may be well applyed to the men in *Noah's* time, and hence the *Heathen* in all likelyhood borrowed the ſtory of their γιγαντομαχία) *Theodotion*, γίγαντες, and St. *Hierome*, *Gigantes*. This I take to be the meaning of the words, as deeming it in no degree probable, that they are to be underſtood of *Sea-Monſters*, ſuch as *Tritons* and *Whales*, as *Grotius*, or of *Metals*, or *Seeds*, as *Others*.

lel,

lel, but only in the *Phraſe* or form of ſpeech, with the *Text*, as ſome imagine; the one reſpecting the times of the Goſpel, the other, the *Age* before the *Floud.*

It only remains to be ſatisfyed, How *Chriſt* can be ſaid to preach to thoſe that lived in the Old World? I Anſwer, That it muſt not be underſtood, as if *Chriſt* did actually preach and appear to the men of that *Generation*; (though ſome of the *Antients* have thought, that *Chriſt* did often appear to the *Patriarchs* in humane ſhape, as a *Præludium* to his *Incarnation*; which Opinion I ſhall not now ſtay to examine) but that he did it by the *Miniſtery* of *Noah*, who is called 2 *Pet.* II. 5. δικαιοσύνης κήρυξ, *a Preacher of Righteouſneſs*; that is, *He* denounced the Judgements of God againſt them for their ſins, fore-warned them of the danger and ruine They were bringing down upon their own Souls, and continually ſounded in their ears an alarm of judgment, that would infallibly overtake them, except they repented, and did by their unfeigned humiliations and amendment of life ſtop and prevent the Anger of God, which otherwiſe would break out upon them, and

over-

overwhelm them in an Universal Deluge. So that by the same divine Power, by which *He* preached in the *Apostles* after the *Resurrection*, who preached in his name, by virtue of that *Commission* and *Authority* They received from Him (and upon this very accompt, He is said to *come*, (a *Phrase* like this in my Text) *and preach peace* to the *Ephesians*, Ch. II. v. 17. as * several have well observed) *He* Preached in the *Prophets*, that lived before his *Coming* in the *Flesh*. 1 *Pet.* I. 10, 11. *Of which Salvation the Prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who Propheſied of the Grace that should come unto you, Searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signifie, when it testifyed before hand the Sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*

* *Archb. Usher, Grotius*, and the Learned Dr. *H.*

The *Prophets* and *Apostles* were the *Ministers* and *Ambassadours* of *Christ*, and therefore what *They* do, *He* is said to do; and the dishonour that is done to Them, God takes as done to himself: 1 *Sam.* VIII. 7. *They have not rejected you*, saith God to *Samuel*, *but They have rejected me*; and our *Saviour* told his *Disciples*, when He commissioned them to Preach in his name, *He that*

that receiveth you, receiveth me; and He that receiveth me, receiveth him that ſent me. St. *Matth.* X. 40. according to that uſual ſaying among the *Jews*, * *Every mans Delegate or Meſſenger is as himſelf.* As here upon Earth, the reſpect or affront that is done to an Ambaſſadour, interpretatively is done to the Perſon whom He repreſents; and the *King* is ſaid in our ordinary diſcourſe to do that, that his *Commiſſioned Miniſter* does in his Name. Let none therefore be ſo vain as to ſay in their hearts, Had we lived in the times of *Meſſiah*, when he was upon Earth, Had we heard thoſe powerfull Oracles of *Truth* drop from his ſacred lips, Had we heard him Preaching to us the Great myſteries of *God*, how affected ſhould we have been! What deep impreſſions would his Preaching have made upon our Souls! For *Chriſt* ſtill Preaches from Heaven to you by his Miniſters. He hath appointed ſeveral Orders, and hath ſetled a Sacred Miniſtery in his Church, and hath provided alſo for a conſtant ſucceſſion to the Worlds end. 2 *Cor.* V. 20. *We are Ambaſſadours for Chriſt, as though God,* (Chriſt, the Son of God) *did beſeech you by us, we pray*

* שלוחו של אדם כמותו

you in Christs stead, be ye reconciled to God. Every Sermon you hear is the voice of *Christ* speaking to you in his *Minister*: And let me add, As *They that heard not Moses and the Prophets*, would not have been perswaded, though one had arose from the Dead; so it may be feared, that those that are deaf to so many admonitions, to such continued and earnest entreaties, that they would repent, and lead better lives, that are resolved to continue in their sins, notwithstanding the frequent and often repeated importunities of Gods Ministers in his Name to the contrary, would even reject the Preaching of *Christ* himself, if He were upon Earth. He hath left his *Gospel* among us, which is *vox Scripta*, his Word put into Writing, and to that he does require our faith, and our obedience, as much as if He was actually present. *He* Preached to the *Old World* by the *Ministery* of *Noah*, and still Preaches to us by the *Ministery* of his *Word:* Their disobedience to Him, for which They were thrust into that infernal *Prison*, consisted in this, That They contemptuously refused his mercy, which was offered to them, and disbelieved the Word which *Noah* Preached:

and

and how ſhall we eſcape, if, amidſt all thoſe frequent invitations that are made us, *we neglect ſo great Salvation* ?

Thus I have removed the difficulties, and cleared the words with as much brevity as I could.

The *Propoſitions*, which are deducible hence, are theſe Four, which I ſhall but briefly touch.

I. That *God* is graciouſly pleaſed to uſe all means to bring men to repentance, before He cuts them off by his Judgments. *He went and preached.*

II. That the Souls of the diſobedient are now ſhut up in *Hell*, *He went and preached to the Spirits*, that now are *in Priſon, which ſometimes were diſobedient.*

III. That God, notwithſtanding the daily and great *Provocations* of ſinfull men, doth oftentimes give them time and ſpace to repent: *The long ſuffering of God once waited in the days of* Noah, *while the Ark was a preparing.*

IV. That in the midſt of the ſevereſt and terribleſt Judgments, that befall the World, there is a mixture of mercy; or, That his Judgments are never ſo general, but he

ſpares ſome. In this *Univerſal Deluge*, as it is juſtly called, *few, that is, Eight Souls were ſaved by Water.*

1. That God is graciouſly pleaſed to uſe all means to bring men to repentance, before he cuts them off by his Judgments: *He went and Preached. God* hath ſet up a light in every mans Soul to direct him in all his waies. *Reaſon* is given to him for a guide, and *Natural Conſcience* tells him his duty, and how he ought to behave himſelf in all capacities whatſoever: without any inſtitution or teaching, every one ſees, by an innate internal light, the Eſſential and Fundamental differences of *good* and *evill*, and none can pretend ignorance. * *He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good*, even by thoſe deep impreſſions, he hath made upon thee, which can never be totally effaced; *and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* And what is or can be more agreeable to nature, then for a man to do, as he would be done to, to be ſociable, and kind, and loving to men of the ſame nature with himſelf, and to crouch and humble himſelf before his Maker, and adore his

* *Micha*, VI. 8.

his Goodneſs, and his other divine Perfections? Yet ſo fooliſh, ſo vain, ſo inconſiderate a thing is *Man*, that he is wilfully forgetfull of his duty, that he throws off thoſe reſtraints, which Nature hath laid upon him, breaks through all obligations of *Religion* and *Conſcience*, refuſeth the conduct of his *Reaſon*, and gives himſelf over to the hurry of his *Paſſions* and fooliſh *Luſts*, and thus puts out his eyes to be lead by a blind guide, till he loſeth himſelf in a maze of errour and vanity. But when we are thus loſt to our ſelves, *God* will not leave us ſo: *He* is pleaſed to find us out, His *Goodneſs* ſtill purſues us. He is unwilling to puniſh, till all his Methods are fruſtrated and diſappointed and rendered ineffectual. Thus when the *Inhabitants* of the *Old World* had forſaken *God* and themſelves too, had *corrupted their wayes*, the whole courſe of their life, and *given up themſelves to work wickedneſs, and that with greedineſs* and delight, He inſpires *Noah* and ſends him among them to re-mind them of their duty, to ſhew them how much they had degenerated from their Nature, to rouſe them out of their carnal ſecurity, by thundering Judgment in their ears,

and

and to bring them home, if poſſible, to himſelf. And after the ſame manner *God* proceeds with *Us*. *He* condeſcends to entreat and beſeech us to accept of his mercy: He woes us by his loving kindneſs: He frights us by his Judgments. *He doth not afflict willingly*, nor *grieve the Children of men*; if he uſeth ſharp Medicines, it is in order to our recovery, becauſe gentle ones could not work the cure. 'Tis true, God will not *force* us to be happy againſt our wills, He will uſe no *violence* to our *Faculties*, He treats us as *Rational* Creatures. He invites, He threatens; He uſes all Arguments to perſwade and work upon us to repent, and accept of his mercy. So far is *God* from *decreeing* the eternal ruine of myriads of his Creatures, meerly to ſhew his *Soveraignty* and *Power*, as ſome maintain to the great prejudice of his *Goodneſs*, that moſt lovely Attribute of a *God*, that He proteſts ſolemnly with an Oath (and ſure *God* is to be believed upon his bare ſaying ſo, much more upon *his* ſo vehement aſſeveration) and He commands the *Prophet* to tell them ſo in his Name, *Ezech.* XXXIII. 11. *As I live, ſaith the Lord, I have no pleaſure in the death of the Wicked*: To theſe diſ-

obedient

obedient and ungodly ones in the *Text*, *Noah* is ſent, in hope that he might reclaim them. God puts the Queſtion to us, and that moſt ſeriouſly in the ſame verſe, *Why will you dye?* Why will you ſo fooliſhly make your ſelves away? Why will you ruine your ſelves for ever? When we are at the brink of the Pit, and hovering over the mouth of Hell, He calls to us to draw back our adventurous Feet, leſt we tumble down the *Precipice*. *Turn ye, turn ye, Why will ye dye?* And as we value our own eternal concern in another World, let us obey this Heavenly call, let us fly to his mercy, which he ſo freely offers to us now in the time of life, for hereafter it will be too late: The Juſtice of God will exact puniſhment on thoſe hereafter, which refuſed his mercy here, and dyed in diſobedience. Which brings me to

2. The Second *Propoſition*; That the Souls of the diſobedient are now ſhut up in Hell. *The Spirits that* are now *in Priſon, which ſometime were diſobedient*. I am not obliged by the nature of the *Propoſition* to vindicate the *Juſtice* of *God* in the puniſhment of a Sinner with Eternal Torment; but only am hence briefly to

ſhew

ſhew the groundleſneſs of their *fancy*, that ſo eaſily perſwade themſelves to the great damping and cooling the heats and ardors of devotion, and to the making men ſuſpicious and miſtruſtfull of its ever being awakened out of ſuch a long and ſtupid *Lethargy*, that the Soul *ſleeps* during the interval between death and the Reſurrection, that it enters the ſame Grave with the Body, without any reflexive knowledge or expectation of the laſt Day, that, in a manner, it is dead for a time, and as ſenſleſs as the Body that is diſſolved into its firſt Principles; as if when freed and diſentangled from Fleſh, it was confined to, and ſhut up in the Grave, there to ſleep out ſome Thouſands of years, if the Goodneſs of God ſhall reprieve the World for ſo long a ſpace, void of all perception, and without exerting any vital operation: A conceipt as wild as the *Poets*, concerning the ſtupifying Waters of *Lethe*, which they fancied to drown and overwhelm the ſenſe and memory of things done here upon Earth.

But not now to allege the * ſeveral Texts of *Scripture* that aſſert the contrary, and that it was

* *Eccl.* XII. 7. *Luke* xxiv. 43. *Act.* I. 25. 2 *Cor.* V. 1. *Phil.* I. 23. and many others.

was the cheif deſign of our Bleſſed *Saviour* in the Parable of the *Rich man* and *Lazarus*, to aſſure us of the ſurvival of the Soul after its Emigration, either in a ſtate of bliſs or woe, nor to lay before you the *Phyſical* Arguments, that might be fetched from the Nature of the *Rational* Soul, and the independency of its Operations, I ſhall only urge at preſent this Moral Conſideration.

The Soul, we know, in ſome of its nobler flights ſoars far above the Earth, and ſeems oftentimes, not only in its raptures and extaſies, but ordinary contemplations, to have no intercourſe with the Body; and when raiſed and advanced by Grace and Holineſs, grows weary of its confinements, and with furious and impatient deſires and longings gaſps and pants after a more cloſe and immediate enjoyment of the Divine Preſence, breathing out, *When ſhall I come and appear before God!* While the diſobedient and the ungodly, that have made their Souls drudges and ſlaves to the brutal Part, to procure for their Luſts, and forced them to comply with their appetites and their humours, and have abuſed all

their faculties contrary to the end and design of the Creatour, when they come to dye, then begin to have too quick a sense, that there is something within them, that will prove immortal, that will pass beyond the Grave, and in all its flittings and wandrings will never be able to shake off the horror of that guilt, which it contracted here upon Earth. These general sentiments, these hopes and fears, that attend the innocent and guilty at such times, when they have the least reason to flatter or abuse themselves, and when They are the likeliest to make the most impartial judgments, seem to me (if there were no express Scripture or other Argument to induce or compel my belief) conviction enough, that the Soul immediately knows its eternal Doom upon its first entry on a new Stage: and that it is very absurd and irrational to doubt of or deny the possibility of a *Souls existing separately*, because we cannot fully comprehend the manner of it, or solve all the difficulties, that some mens *Curiosity* and *Scepticism* have raised with convincing *Demonstrations*, and evidence no less than *Mathematical*.

3. That

3. That God notwithſtanding mens daily and great Provocations oftentimes vouchſafes to them time and ſpace to repent: *The long ſuffering of God once waited in the days of* Noah, *while the Ark was a preparing.* How much and how greatly God was provoked by their ſins, before He threatened them with his Judgments, you may read in the *Sixth* of *Geneſis.* Wickedneſs had overſpread the Face of the whole *Earth*: There was a General *Apoſtacy* amongſt men: They had forgot *God* that made them: They had thrown off all fear of his *Name:* They gave up themſelves to their *Luſts*, and *their own hearts deſire:* Their *thoughts* and *imaginations* were ſet upon evill and miſchief: They were guilty of *unnatural* and *beaſtly* luſts, and of all manner of *injuſtice* and *violence:* So great was their *Wickedneſs*, that it troubled and *grieved God* at the *very heart, that he had made man.* Well, God ſends *Noab* among them: But do they hearken to the voice of the *Prophet?* Hath his Preaching any influence upon their lives? Nothing leſs: They were in[illegible]rious ſtill, * κόσμος ἀσεβῶν, a World of ungodly wretches, ἀπειθήσαντες in the *Text*,

* 2 *Pet.* II. 5.

 They

They were *disobedient* and refractory still, They would not be perswaded, nor would They believe. He threatned them with a Deluge, that should overwhelm them, except They amend; and by Gods appointment Sixscore years before the time, that they might not complain of a surprise, sets upon the building of an *Ark*, to convince them by a visible representation of Gods intended purpose, and * *By this He condemned the World, and became Heir of the righteousnes that is by Faith*, Heb. XI. 7. Every stroke should have been more terrible in their ears, than a Clap of Thunder: but they were resolved to stand it out. Possibly they might come to him, while he was busily imployed about his work, and vent their infidelity in a piece of raillery, and laugh at his credulity and fear, as some of our Modern *Atheists* droll upon the Day of Judgment; What meanest thou, O thou Foolish *Builder*, by this strange Project and device? The impossibility of the thing seems to us a sufficient confutation of your Prophecy, and your design too, that all the Earth should be covered with Water; and what the Mountains too? and be changed into Sea.

* Δι' ἣν i. e. Κιβωτὸν, By which Ark so built: though it may also refer to πίστις. But the former sense seems to be the most Natural and right.

Sea. This is againſt Nature, and therefore cannot be. Thus they might diſpute and argue themſelves into a confident diſbelieſe of the threatned Judgment. But ſee the Goodneſs of *God* and his unlimited Patience! Notwithſtanding all their infidelity, and beaſtlineſs, and abominable immoralityes, *His long ſuffering ſtill waited* * ἀπεξεδέχετο, ſtill patiently, and with all gentleneſs imaginable, expected their amendment. God needed not to have given them any warning at all; His Juſtice might have ſwallowed them up quick, without the leaſt notice or intimation of his intended fury: but He *waits, that he may be gracious. If he turn not, He will whet his Sword; he hath bent his Bow, and made it ready, Pſal.* VII. 12. And yet though his ſword be bright and gliſtering, it is long before He ſtrikes; though his bow be bent, yet the deadly Arrows do not preſently fly abroad. He Summons us to yield, and parles with us, before He ſtorms us with his Judgments. How loath and unwilling is God to put his threats into execution! as if it were a doing violence to his Nature to puniſh. *Hoſea,* XI. 8. *How ſhall I give thee up, O Ephraim?*

* In one word, as in ſeveral places of the N. T.

im? how ſhall I deliver thee, Iſrael? how ſhall I make thee, as Admah? *how ſhall I ſet thee as* Zeboim? *My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.* They wrong God then in the beſt of his Attributes, in That, that he delights and glories in, that repreſent him to the World, as plotting and contriving the ruine of his Creatures, by an *abſolute and peremptory decree*, as if he was an *Almighty Tyrant*. No, He takes no pleaſure in revenge, but is very willing and deſirous to be prevented in his Executions. *Revel.* II. 5. *Remember from whence thou art fallen and repent, and do the firſt Works; or elſe I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candleſtick out of its place, except thou repent.* To apply this in one word to our ſelves: There is none here, I believe, whoſe Conſcience doth not ſuggeſt to him ſuch like thoughts as theſe; Thus graciouſly hath God dealt with me; He might have juſtly cut me off in the midſt of my ſins at ſuch and ſuch a time, but he was pleaſed to ſpare me, and I am this day alive a Monument of his Mercy: and there is none too, but hath had frequent Warnings from God, either by remorſe and

touches

touches of Conſcience, or by his Miniſters, or by the Judgments that have been in the midſt of us; eſpecially the raging and conſuming *Peſtilence*, and the late Diſmal *Fire*. But what uſe have we made of all theſe diſpenſations? Let us therefore at laſt be perſwaded to cloſe with God, and hearken to his Voice, that Thunders out of Heaven, and no longer *deſpiſe the riches of his goodneſs, and forbearance, and long-ſuffering, as knowing*, and being throughly convinced, *that the goodneſs of God ſhould lead us to Repentance*.

4. The Fourth Propoſition, That in the midſt of the ſevereſt Judgments, that befall the World, there is a mixture of Mercy; or, that Gods Judgments are never ſo Univerſal, but He ſpares ſome. In this Univerſal Deluge few, that is, *Eight Souls were ſaved by Water*. Where I might obſerve

I. The means of their preſervation, it was by an *Ark*.

II. The number of thoſe Perſons, that were preſerved, which was incomparably ſmall in reſpect

reſpect of thoſe vaſt multitudes that periſhr, *wherein few*, that is, *Eight Souls were ſaved by Water*. The Hiſtory of which Judgment was recorded and taken notice of by *Heathen* Writers, being derived down to them by a general and uninterrupted tradition, though not ſo clear in all particularities, by reaſon of ſome mixtures and additions of their own, and the beliefe of it was retained among them, notwithſtanding their ignorance in other matters, and their ſuperinduced Barbariſm. But on this I muſt not now enlarge, only in general as to the Propoſition, I ſhall explain it by the Hiſtory of the Text, and confirm it by a double inſtance.

God had often forewarned theſe Inhabitants of the Old World of his Judgments, but they continued careleſs and unmindfull: S^t. *Luke* XVII. 27. *They did eat, they drank, they married Wives, they were given in Marriage, untill the day, that* Noah *entred into the Ark, and the Flood came and deſtroyed them all:* They continued their ſports and their frolicks, They ſwam in pleaſures, and drowned their reaſon by their full draughts, as carnally minded, as unbelieving

unbelieving and ſecure as ever, till the *very day*, whereon the Flood-gates and Sluces of Heaven were opened, and Rivers of Water were poured out of the Skie, and the Fountains of the great Abyſs were broken up, and then they were forced to mix Tears with their Wine; their rich and coſtly Dainties, wherewith they had corrupted and overcharged Nature, turned into Gall and Wormwood; their Exceſſes and their Wantonneſs and their careſſes into loathing and horrour and confuſion; they exchanged their Marriage-Songs and Triumphs into ſhrieks and howlings; doubly overwhelmed, with the Waves, and with grief as ſwelling and as impetuous. Thus they periſhed in the Waters, while *Noah* and his little Family was ſafe-houſed in the *Ark*. So when Clouds of *Fire* and *Brimſtone* diſcharged themſelves upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, and conſumed the impure Inhabitants, who had burned with unnatural Luſts, and were *ſet on Fire of Hell*, before they were from Heaven, God ſent his Angels to reſcue *Lot* from the Flame: And thus the believing *Jews*, that were in *Jeruſalem*,

Gen. XIX. 15. St. *Pet.* II. 6, 7.

a Voice from Heaven, heard by some of them, admonishing and inviting them to depart thence, as * *Eusebius* relates, after the Siege was unexpectedly raised by *Gallus*, laid hold on the opportunity, and went over *Jordan* to *Pella*, and so were freed from all those unparalell'd miseryes, which their obstinate and perverse and unbelieving Country-men were forced to endure from the *close Siege* of *Titus*, that happened some Months after. To Conclude; As the Old World was once drowned and overwhelmed by Water, so we believe God will one day let loose upon it that other more fierce and raging Element of Fire, which shall consume all its Glories into Ashes, and make it but as one Funeral pyle at the dissolution of Nature. We all profess to believe, that Christ will come to judge both the quick and the dead, and we have had frequent Warnings and Alarms of his Coming. How doth it concern us to prepare for that Day, wherein we and all the Generations of men, that ever were or ever shall be, must stand before his Throne

* *Historiæ Eccles.* lib. III. cap. V. ——τὸ λαὸν ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις ἐκκλησίας καὶ ἴνα χρησμὸν τοῖς αὐτόθι δοκίμοις δι' ἀποκαλύψεως ἐκδοθέντα, πρὸ τοῦ πολέμου μεταναστῆναι τῆς πόλεως, καὶ ἴνα τῆς πατρίας πόλιν ὁλικῶν κατακλυσμόν, Πέλλαν αὐτὴν ὀνομάζωσι——

Throne, and not delay our repentance one moment, leſt Death ſurpriſe us on a ſuddain, and as Death leaves us, Judgment will find us; but ſecure an Intereſt in *CHRIST*, and make him our Advocate, who is to be our Judge: And then happy ſhall we be at that day amidſt the noyſe of the periſhing World; and as *Noah* and his Family were ſaved in the Univerſal Deluge, as the Text ſayes, δι' ὕδατος, *through* or *in the midſt of Water*, ſo ſhall we be ſaved in the time of that Univerſal Conflagration, διὰ πυρὸς, *through* or *in the midſt of Fire.*

Page, 43. *l.* 24. in ſome Copies r. *impious*. *p.* 47. *l.* 5. *wr. p.* 47. *l.* 23. *incomparably.*

FINIS.